

DECEMBER 2011 BIRD NOTES

December Highlights: Red-throated and Great Northern Divers and White-fronted Goose.

December found only 90 species, but added 2 species to the year total, taking the 2011 tally to 170 species. This total was bettered only in 2002 when 173 species were recorded and, like 2011, 2002 was also a year of low water levels. Water levels have been rising all this month and should continue into next year, but wintering wildfowl numbers had already been affected and are significantly lower than usual. The adult Great Northern Diver, which arrived in November, stayed all month and an adult Red-throated Diver made a brief appearance early on 17th but had moved on to Rudyard Lake in Staffs by lunchtime. A European race White-fronted Goose was found with the Canada Geese on 13th and was seen occasionally up to the end of the month. It arrived on a day when other White-fronts were recorded moving south and it is the first record here since January 1999. A female Teal with a painted bill (nasal saddle) was found on 7th and traced to being marked in Normandy during the winter in 2009. Maximum counts were from the WeBS count on 18th unless dated otherwise: 2 Little Grebe, 36 Great Crested Grebe, 19 Mute Swan on 11th, 1 Greylag Goose, 175 Canada Geese on 28th, 23 feral Barnacle Geese on 28th, 4 Shelduck, 56 Wigeon, 10 Gadwall on 5th, 351 Teal, 190 Mallard, 10 Pintail on 15th, 5 Shoveler on 12th, 15 Pochard, 324 Tufted Duck, 10 Goldeneye on 28th, 1 Red-breasted Merganser on 9th, 15 Goosander on 10th and 278 Coot.

The only notable raptor record was of a pair of Peregrine consuming a Lapwing in front of Sheepwash Hide on 20th. Waders roosting and feeding at the Sailing Club end of the dam wall shoreline continued from last month with maximum numbers being 155 Golden Plover on 7th, 28 Dunlin on 9th and 12 Snipe on 6th. Waders elsewhere on site were 2 Redshank opposite the Wildlife Centre on 19th and a Greenshank at dusk on 1st.

The gull roost held 2 adult Mediterranean Gulls on 1st and 2nd and then 1 up to 15th. Black-headed Gull numbers have been in the low thousands but too widely spread to count. There were over 500 Common Gulls in the roost on 24th, only 50 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 24th, 20 Herring Gulls on 4th and 12th, 3 Yellow-legged Gulls up to 12th and 46 Great Black-backed Gulls were on Sheepwash shoreline at 0830hrs on 19th and then flew east.

Two Stock Doves were noted on 1st and 2nd and 12 Collared Dove on 28th. The wintering Meadow Pipit and Pied Wagtail flocks have been active daily around the shores of Sheepwash and Stones Island and numbered 113 Meadow Pipit on 28th and 93 Pied Wagtail 23rd. There was a flock of 100 wintering thrushes, mainly Fieldfare, in Fishtail Creek on 2nd and 30 Redwing noted elsewhere on 27th. Other notable counts were; 16 Long-tailed Tits together in Hall Wood on 2nd, 2 Willow Tits on Paul Stanley Hide feeders on 22nd, over 500 Jackdaw over Sheepwash at dusk on 5th, 40 Tree Sparrow around the Ranger Base and Wildlife Centre on 12th, 1 Brambling on 5th and 13th, 40 Goldfinch in Fishtail Creek on 2nd, 30 Siskin in Wildlife Centre Creek on 20th, at least 130 Linnets on 9th, 8 Lesser Redpoll on 5th and 11th, 9 Crossbill over Millfields on 1st and 12 Bullfinch on 21st.

90 species recorded compared with 88 in December 2010, 93 in 2009, 95 in 2008, 91 in 2007, 99 in 2006, 88 in 2005, 95 in 2004, 97 in 2003 and 89 in 2002.

NOVEMBER 2011 BIRD NOTES

Highlights: Whooper & Bewick's Swan, Little Gull, Black Redstart and Snow Bunting.

November brought in a good 98 species but there are no wintering Great Northern Divers yet, wildfowl numbers are well down on recent winters and water levels are 50% capacity and still falling. On 13th 11 Bewick's Swan settled briefly near Stones Island and 3 Whooper Swan flew over NE on 14th. Pink-footed Geese included 2 with Canada Geese on 12th and 80 flying NE on 15th. Wildfowl maximum counts are from the WeBS count on 26th except where stated: 17 Little Grebe on 7th, 28 Great Crested Grebe, 17 Cormorant, 3 Little Egret on 10th, 27 Mute Swan, 75 Wigeon, 9 Gadwall on 28th, 247 Teal, 158 Mallard, 7 Pintail on 12th, 2 Shoveler on 9th, 2 Red-crested Pochard on 24th, 32 Pochard on 14th, 307 Tufted Duck, 3 Immature/female Scaup on 3rd, 1 immature/female Common Scoter 11-14th, 9 Goldeneye on 11th, 3 Goosander on 29th and only 319 Coot, which is 1000 less than last year. A Grey Partridge was a surprise on Stones Island on 15-16th and, with 9 Pheasants at dawn roosting in trees near Paul Stanley Hide, these gamebird sightings suggest they may be from a local shooting club release.

Raptors have been active with a female Sparrowhawk taking a Collared Dove at the Ranger Base on 23rd, a female Kestrel catching and stashing 2 voles at Sheepwash on 28th, at least 3 different Peregrine causing panic in the wader flocks throughout the month and 2 peregrine together on 30th.

Waders have featured well again this month with flocks of Golden Plover, Lapwing and Dunlin. These flocks roosted at the Sailing Club end of the dam wall and could be seen there or at Sheepwash during the daytime or occasionally in the air pursued by a Peregrine. Wader numbers were: 1 Oystercatcher on 13th, a maximum count of 361 Golden Plover on 14th, a Grey Plover at Sheepwash on 8th, 530 Lapwing on 21st, 27 Dunlin on 14th, 7 Snipe on 10th, a Bar-tailed Godwit from Lane End Hide on 15th, 3 Redshank on 7th and a Greenshank from 14th to end of the month.

The low water levels have not affected the gull roost numbers which have included an adult Mediterranean Gull on many dates, together with a first winter bird on 28th. A first winter Little Gull took refuge with the early roosters during a rainstorm on 29th. Roost maximum counts were 6000 Black-headed Gull on 22nd, 250 Common Gull on 26th, 5500 Lesser Black-backed Gull on 16th, 11 Herring Gull on 7th and 5 Yellow-legged Gull on 12th and 16th.

A first winter male Black Redstart (fifth record at Carsington) was at Millfields end of the dam wall on 22nd. Coincidentally the same date as a first winter bird last year, but obviously not the same bird returning. Another rare bird, a Snow Bunting (third record for Carsington), was reported on pagers on 28th and this species requires a DOS rarity form submission. Other records included: flocks of Woodpigeon totalling 1190 birds flying NE early on 19th, a Kingfisher on 9th, 100 Meadow Pipits on 2nd, 65 Pied Wagtail on 7th, 24 Blackbirds on 17th, 25 Fieldfare on 9th, 90 Redwing on 2nd, 6 Willow Tit on 7th, 63 Tree Sparrow around the Ranger Base feeders on 23rd, 2 Brambling on 5th, a flock of 100 Linnet around Sheepwash on 10th and other dates and 13 Crossbill over Sheepwash on 8th.

98 species recorded compared with 96 in November 2010, 104 in 2009, 94 in 2008 and 98 in 2007.

OCTOBER 2011 BIRD NOTES

October Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Whooper Swan, Red Kite, Arctic Skua and Water Pipit.

Following two record breaking months, this month is back to average. A moulting adult Great Northern Diver was at Sheepwash mid-morning on 17th, a little too early for a winter stayer or could it be the low water levels? There were 25 Little Grebe on 2nd, 37 Great Crested Grebe on 18th, 45 Cormorant on 4th, 4 Little Egret on 6th, 10 Heron on 6th and 19 Mute Swan on 18th. Winter swan passage started with 3 Whooper Swan on 6th, 5 on 13th and 3 on 19th. Resident geese numbers were significantly swelled mid-month by attraction to what must have been a good food area southwest of Millfields. A Pink-footed Goose was among the flocks on 8-11th. Greylag Geese big counts were 122 on 6th, 355 on 10th, a record breaking 395 on 13th, then reducing rapidly, with only 140 on 19th. Canada Geese numbered 802 on 9th and 750 on 12th, which is well above the current residential flock of 400. Feral Barnacle Geese were also coming in during this period, with 23 on 2nd and 12th. Maximum Duck counts were 335 Wigeon on 4th, 32 Gadwall on 9th, 282 Teal on 18th, 141 Mallard on 18th, 5 Pintail on 10th, 12 Shoveler on 2nd, 2 Red-crested Pochard on 9-18th, 33 Pochard on 18th, 335 Tufted Duck on 9th, 8 Goosander on 1st and 1016 Coot on the formal WeBS count on 18th.

Raptors included a Red Kite drifting towards the water on 6th and another was seen from Sheepwash Hide on 16th being mobbed by lapwing and heron, then heading southeast. A male Sparrow Hawk had to be released from inside the Wildlife Centre on 1st. This also happened a year ago and is likely due to small males chasing sparrows around the building and being suddenly faced with a log screening or an open door and it takes the easy open door. A female/immature Merlin was hunting near the dam wall on 8th and another passed Sheepwash on 26th. An adult female Peregrine was seen to kill a Teal in front of Sheepwash Hide on 10th. The observer took a series of photos showing the gradual devouring and, at an early stage, the head of the Teal some distance away.

Waders were attracted to Sailing Club shoreline again this month. An Oystercatcher was at Sheepwash on 20th. Ringed Plover remained in front of the Sailing Club from last month, with 5 on 4th and the last 1 on 19th. Golden Plover were notable, with 10 flying southwest on 6th, over 50 landing briefly before being flushed by a Peregrine on 25th, 11 at Sheepwash on 27th and 7 still there on 31st. A Grey Plover was at Sheepwash on 9th and 10th and a Lapwing count on 31st was 187. A Little Stint remained in front of the Sailing Club from last month until 7th, Curlew Sandpiper there numbered 2 on 1st, 4 on 3rd, 8 on 4th, 7 on 5th and the last 1 was on 12th. There were 20 Dunlin on 1st, 25 on 8th, 34 on 10th, down to 10 on 14th and still 10 on 31st. Four Ruff were still there on 1st but only 1 on 2nd which was seen occasionally until 29th and 2 were seen flying southwest on 9th. Snipe maximum was 7 on 4th and a Redshank was seen at various locations from 21st to 25th. The Gull Roost was well panicked on 19th when a juvenile Arctic Skua flew through. Significant gull records were an adult and a first winter Mediterranean Gull on 20th, 2000 Black-headed Gull on 4th and 4 Yellow-legged Gull on 13th and 16th.

Autumn movement brought 100 Woodpigeon over on 21st, 45 Skylark over on 13th, 3 late Swallow on 14th, big numbers of Meadow Pipit, with 170 on 9th, a Water Pipit on Stones Island on 5th, 3 Rock Pipit on 13th and 14th, the last Wheatear on 24th, 50 Fieldfare and 800 Redwing on 13th, 15 Tree Sparrow feeding in Fishtail Creek on 13th, a Brambling on 22nd, 40 Siskin on 9th, 55 Linnet at Sheepwash on 21st, 6 Lesser Redpoll on 15th, Crossbill heard flying over on 6th and 19th and 4 Yellowhammer flew over the dam on 2nd.

103 species recorded this October compared with 109 in 2010, 108 in 2009, 94 in 2008 and 109 in 2007.

SEPTEMBER 2011 BIRD NOTES

September Highlights: Gannet, Brent Goose, Honey Buzzard, Osprey and Arctic Skua.

This September was the biggest month ever, with 124 Species, beating the previous record of 122 in Aug 2002. A Gannet flew in at 1540hrs on 13th, circled, settled on the water, then was disturbed by a juvenile peregrine and flew off northeast. The plumage showed a fourth winter bird. On 16th there was a juvenile Brent Goose off Stones Island. With common wintering wildfowl numbers increasing, the maximum counts were (for WeBS on 19th unless dated otherwise): 31 Little Grebe, 30 Great Crested Grebe, 45 Cormorant on 21st, 1 Little Egret on 15th, 13 Heron on 18th, 25 Mute Swans, 1 Pinkfoot, 146 Greylag on 29th, 700 Canada Geese on 29th, 23 Barnacle on 27th, 1 Shelduck on 16th, 1 Mandarin on 11th, 167 Wigeon, 63 Gadwall on 21st, 357 Teal, 236 Mallard, 2 Pintail on 3rd, 8 Shoveler on 25th, 2 Red-crested Pochard on 3rd and 11th, 24 Pochard, 394 Tufted Duck, 9 Goosander on 25th and 1095 Coot.

A Honey Buzzard flew south over Fishtail Creek at 1845hrs on 9th, a rare event witnessed by 2 observers on Stones Island. An Osprey seen heading south at 1450hrs on 7th turned out to be called Rothermurcus, a tracker tagged bird from Scotland. Two Hobby were over Hall Wood on 4th and singles were noted on other dates. Peregrine were noted almost daily with juveniles practising 'surprise attacks' and 2 birds were seen on 6th.

Wader passage was again good this month with 19 species and maximums of: 8 Little Ringed Plover on 3rd, 24 Ringed Plover on 18th, 1 Golden Plover over on 16th, 1 Grey Plover at Sheepwash on 18th, 2 Knot on 14th, 4 Curlew Sandpiper on 10th, 29 Dunlin on 25th, 5 Ruff on 11th, 7 Snipe on 29th, 1 Black-tailed Godwit on 6th, 1 Bar-tailed Godwit on 2nd, 1 Whimbrel on 11th, 2 Curlew on 1st, 4 Redshank on 14th, 4 Greenshank on 4th, 2 Green Sandpiper on 15th, 2 Common Sandpiper on 6th and 3 Turnstone on 22nd. Most of these waders were in front of the Sailing Club near the dam wall and best viewed from there.

A huge disturbance to the big gull roost at dusk on 24th revealed a juvenile Arctic Skua flying around. There was obviously a possibility of it roosting and, through the poor light of dawn, it was seen to leave at 0645hrs on 25th. A juvenile Mediterranean Gull was near the Sailing Club on 4th and a Little Gull flew towards Millfields on 1st. The gull roost held 7000 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 21st, 11 Yellow-legged Gulls on 23rd and an adult Caspian Gull on 9th. There were 2 Sandwich Tern mid-afternoon on 28th, 7 Common Tern on 29th, 1 Arctic Tern early morning on 15th and 2 juvenile Black Tern on 20th, with singles on other dates.

A Kingfisher was seen from Paul Stanley Hide on 2nd and a Green Woodpecker was heard in Tail Bay on 26th. Movement southwards has been very noticeable, with 7 Skylarks on 26th, the last Sand Martin on 13th, 100 Swallow through in 15 minutes on 13th, 2 House Martin on 23rd, Meadow Pipits were everywhere every day and the maximum count was 170 on 21st, a Rock Pipit was on Stones Island briefly on 15th, Yellow Wagtail daily with 8 on 17th, 177 Pied Wagtail on the dam early on 22nd and 4 White Wagtail there on 17th. A male Redstart was in the Wildlife Centre Creek on 21st, a Whinchat on Horseshoe Island on 6th and Wheatear daily with 3 on 11th. Warblers included a Lesser Whitethroat on 15th, a Whitethroat on 29th, a Blackcap on 30th, 18 Chiffchaff on 13th and a Willow Warbler singing on 4th.

124 Species were recorded this September compared with 117 in 2010, 103 in 2009, 108 in 2008, 108 in 2007, 101 in 2006, 101 in 2005, 94 in 2004 and 104 in 2003.

AUGUST 2011 BIRD NOTES

August Highlights: 4 Little Egret, Marsh Harrier, Osprey, 20 Species of Wader, Mediterranean Gull, Sandwich Tern, Wood Warbler and Marsh Tit.

What a difference a year makes: Aug 2010 Highlights 'A dull month with no highlights' and only 94 species compared with 119 species this Aug, which is just 3 species below the best ever month at Carsington. Waterbird maximums included 19 Little Grebe on 15th, 51 Great Crested Grebe on 5th, 34 Cormorants on 31st, a site record number 4 Little Egret on 14th, 12 Heron on 15th, 23 adult Mute Swan plus 6 cygnets on 10th, a Pink-footed Goose on 2nd and 14th (escapee?), 8 Greylag on 22nd, a year maximum 403 Canada Geese on 20th, 5 Shelduck on 17th, 11 Wigeon on 31st, 38 Gadwall on 21st, 114 Teal on 29th, 319 Mallard on 15th, 5 Shoveler on 18th and 26th, 1 Red-crested Pochard 12th-31st, 4 Pochard on 2nd and 277 Tufted Duck plus 664 Coot during the WeBS count on 16th.

A site rare female or immature Marsh Harrier flew over Stones Island heading northeast at 1745hrs on 31st. Sparrowhawk were noted carrying prey on 1st and 2nd and 6 Common Buzzard were in the air on 30th. An Osprey was around 0950-1030hrs on 19th, attracting mobbing from 2 Buzzard and an immature Peregrine and later from 3 Herons, all with necks fully outstretched. Another Osprey cruised straight through heading south at 1215hrs on 30th. A Hobby was seen carrying prey on 12th and there were many records of Peregrine, with 3 together on 4th and 8th.

Wader passage has been superb, low water levels have helped and, apart from Stones Island and Sheepwash being the favourite locations, Brown Ale Bay and Millfields have held waders on the muddy shore. Maximum counts included: 15 Oystercatcher on 28th, 10 Little-ringed Plover on 12th, 16 Ringed Plover on 13th, 1 Golden Plover flying over on 8th and 24th, 20 Lapwing on 1st, 17 Knot in flight on 26th including 1 bird retaining some red summer plumage, 2 Sanderling on 9th, a Little Stint on 12th-13th and 20th, 4 Dunlin on 12th-17th, 3 Ruff briefly on 23rd, 3 Snipe on 15th, a Black-tailed Godwit on 1st and 8th, 3 Whimbrel flew over on 15th, 2 Curlew flew over on 14th, a Spotted Redshank on 18th, 3 Redshank on 9th and 31st, 3 Greenshank on 26-31st, a Green Sandpiper 14th-31st, 11 Common Sandpiper on 8th and 5 Turnstone on 24th.

Last month's juvenile Mediterranean Gull was again on site this month on 15th and 16th and 2 Common Gull were noted on 14th. The gull roost started with 4600 Lesser Black-backed Gulls being counted flying in on 26th, most during the last minutes of any daylight. The winter resident Yellow-legged Gull was present all month and was seen eating fish on 14th, 3 birds were noted on 31st. Two Sandwich Terns were a welcome sight on 13th, with 3 Common Tern on 1st and 3rd and an Arctic Tern on 27th.

There were 2 Stock Doves on 12th, 7 Collared Dove on 8th, a Little Owl near a nest box on 16th, 2 Swift on 13th, a Kingfisher on 3rd, a Green Woodpecker and a Skylark on 15th and 3 Meadow Pipit on 31st. Yellow Wagtail were moving through from 12th, and 19 on 22nd is certainly an autumn passage site record. The maximum Pied Wagtail count was 91, 5 Redstart on 8th, 2 Wheatear on 8th, a Wood Warbler and 2 Spotted Flycatcher in Fishtail Creek on 28th, a Marsh Tit calling behind Sheepwash Hide on 1st, 150 Goldfinch on Stones Island on 27th and 3 Crossbills flew over Hopton Arm on 13th.

119 Species were recorded this August compared with 94 in 2010, 102 in 2009, 99 in 2008, 109 in 2007, 97 in 2006, 105 in 2005, 113 in 2004 and 110 in 2003.

JULY 2011 BIRD NOTES

Highlights: Little Egret, Red Kite, Mediterranean Gull, Grasshopper Warbler and Crossbill.

By the end of July, this year's numbers of broods totalled: Little Grebe 1 (1 last year), Great Crested Grebe 3 (8), Mallard 20 (20), Tufted Duck 4 (26), Moorhen 3 (7) and Coot 3 (12). Maximum counts, excluding young, were 5 Little Grebe on 25th, 32 Great Crested Grebe on the official WeBS count carried out on 18th, 24 Cormorant on 29th, 1 Little Egret on 1-4th and 25-31st, 12 Heron on 27th, 22 Mute Swan on 6th plus 6 cygnets, 2 Greylag Geese on 10th, 359 Canada Geese on 18th, 1 juvenile Shelduck on 3rd and 26th, 1 Wigeon on 14th and 23rd, 5 Gadwall on 6th, 4 Teal on 6th, 267 Mallard on 22nd, 4 Pochard on 20th, 182 Tufted Duck on 18th, 4 Common Scoter on 21st and 30th, 8 Goosander on 27th and 408 Coot on 18th.

Raptors included 2 Red Kite together over Fishtail Creek on 29th at 1845hrs before gliding off northeast, Sparrow Hawk carrying prey on 6th and 25th, 6 Buzzards on 13th and at least 2 young calling from woodland on 28th, 2 Kestrel on 25th and many records of Peregrines, with 3 together over Hopton Arm on 31st.

Little Ringed Plover have taken advantage of the wide shore available this year and bred, showing a brood of 4 on 25th and another brood of 4 on 26th. Wader maximum numbers were 5 Oystercatchers on 23rd, 8 Little Ringed Plover on 29th excluding young, 3 well flighted juvenile Ringed Plover on 11th, at least 50 Lapwing on 18th, a Sanderling at the Wildlife Centre on 19th, 7 Dunlin on 18th, an early Snipe on 30th, 3 Black-tailed Godwit on 11th and singles on many dates, 1 Curlew on 11th, 4 Redshank on 18th, 5 Greenshank on 13th, 2 Green Sandpiper on 28th and a site record 18 Common Sandpipers on 18th.

A well flighted juvenile Mediterranean Gull was at the Wildlife Centre on 19th. This is the first juvenile recorded on site and one asks where has it travelled from. An adult Med Gull was also at the Wildlife Centre on 21st. Black-headed Gull numbers totalled 270 on 20th including 55 juveniles, but not all had hatched here. There were 4 Common Gulls on 20-22nd and Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers were increasing, with 180 on 20th. The winter resident adult Yellow-legged Gull was on site from 3rd and seen devouring a smallish mammal on 4th thought to be a mole, followed by a Little Grebe on 13th, surprised it could find one! Other Yellow-legged Gulls were on site, with 5 recorded on 21st. Common Terns were passing through in very small numbers, with a maximum of 5 on 23rd and 1 Arctic Tern on 22nd.

Swifts looked to be feeding young in the eaves of the Visitor Centre early in the month and 50 were noted passing through on 13th. An adult and a juvenile Green Woodpecker were together at Millfields on 13th. Early passage was noted with a Meadow Pipit on the dam wall on 22nd, a Yellow Wagtail on Sheepwash Spit on 25th and a Wheatear on the dam wall on 28th. A Grasshopper Warbler was heard reeling near Millfields Island on 23rd and remained until 27th. A Reed Warbler family were seen in Hopton Arm Reedbed on 17th and a pair of Spotted Flycatcher were feeding 3 just fledged youngsters in Penn Carr on 13th. A nationwide Crossbill movement has been well noted here with fly-overs of 3 on 13th, 6 on 22nd, at least 1 on 23rd, 2 on 24th and 12 on 26th. Finally one observer reported 2 bizarre predations occurring within one half hour on 30th. A mole, crawling across the hard foreshore towards vegetation, in front of Sheepwash Hide, was attacked, killed and taken by 3 Magpies, only to be followed by a Southern Hawker dragonfly taken in mid-air by a Blackbird.

105 Species were recorded this month (well above the former July record of 102 in 2004), compared with 91 in July 2010, 95 in 2009, 97 in 2008, 94 in 2007, 94 in 2006 and 97 in 2005.

JUNE 2011 BIRD NOTES

June Highlights: Black-throated Diver, Little Egret, Common Scoter and Osprey.

Last month's first summer Black-throated Diver was last seen on 12th, it obviously moved on despite being into its moult. A Little Egret was seen in flight on 22nd, then landed at Paul Stanley Hide, and was still on site near the Wildlife Centre (WLC) on 30th. Great Crested Grebe had 3 broods by the end of the month, each with 1 young and a Mute Swan pair have 6 cygnets, usually seen being displayed to the WLC. Barnacle Geese have again failed breeding and the birds have left site. Mallard added 8 broods this month, taking the total to 17 broods this year, well above an average year. The first Tufted Duck brood appeared at Sheepwash on 25th and another on 29th, although the latter brood seemed parentless at the time of observation. Moorhen showed 2 broods by 11th and Coot 3 broods by 15th, which is low compared with the past few years. Notable counts included 47 Great Crested Grebe on 15th, 7 Heron on 29th, 343 Canada Geese on 20th, a hybrid drake Shelduck/Mallard cross from 20th, a drake Wigeon on 7th, 3 Teal on 29th, 98 Mallard on 15th, a drake Pintail from 3rd to 7th, a pair of Red-crested Pochard from last month to 7th, 2 drake Pochard from 1st to 8th and 171 Tufted Duck and 142 Coot on 15th. Five drake Common Scoter flew in early on 29th and were joined briefly by 2 others in the afternoon.

Raptor records included a Sparrowhawk carrying prey on 11th and on several subsequent days, all into the same woodland area. A Common Buzzard was causing chaos with the breeding Black-headed Gulls and Common Tern on Flat Island on 21st and 5 Buzzard were in the air on 8th and 16th. An Osprey flew southwest over the dam wall at 0828hrs on 1st and a Peregrine was seen on 15th, 22nd and 27th.

Wader breeding so far this year is; only 2 Oystercatcher broods and another pair still sitting, at least 6 broods of Lapwing, which is better than recent years, and 3 broods of Redshank. Other waders recorded include a Ringed Plover on Stones Island on 30th, a Sanderling on Sheepwash Spit on 9th, 9 Dunlin at Sheepwash on 16th, 18 Black-tailed Godwit at the WLC on 28th and another 13 on 30th and 2 Curlew and 2 Common Sandpiper on 29th.

Black-headed Gull nests at the WLC were 7 on the tern raft and at least 3 on Horseshoe Island. On 29th, 19 chicks were noted in broods of 3+2+2 on the raft and 4+3+2+2 on the island, many of these were from the raft. Three nests at Sheepwash had failed on 1st, most likely by fox predation. The number of nests on Flat Island is not known, but young at one nest could be seen on 15th and 61 Black-headed Gulls roosted there on 3rd. Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers are beginning to build up towards the end of the day, with 10 on 20th and 120 on 29th. A second summer Yellow-legged Gull was on Horseshoe Island on 29th. The pair of Common Terns breeding on Flat Island had probably failed by 20th.

A Collared Dove nest in the Visitor Centre car park had 2 big young in it on 5th and cars parked within feet of it on two sides. A Barn Owl was around Sheepwash on 25th, 200 Swift went through on 5th, a Kingfisher was at Millfields on 16th and 23rd and a Green Woodpecker at Millfields on 13th. Three pairs of Swallow are breeding in the Millfields area and there are 18 House Martin nests around the Visitor Centre. A Grey Wagtail family were on Stones Island on 20th, a Redstart family in WLC Creek also on 20th, a Sedge Warbler singing in the WLC reeds from 7-29th, a pair of Reed Warbler feeding a nest in Hopton Arm reedbed on 26th, a Lesser Whitethroat family in WLC Creek on 30th, 4 Whitethroat pairs reported breeding, 3 Willow tit families noted, the local Raven pair with 2 juveniles successfully in the air on 11th, 6 Raven flew over on 29th and 11 active/used House Sparrow nests were found around the Visitor Centre on 1st.

95 Species this month compared with 87 in June 2010, 93 in 2009, 91 in 2008, 93 in 2007 and 89 in 2006.

MAY 2011 BIRD NOTES

May Highlights: Black-throated and Great Northern Divers, Red Kite, Osprey, Hobby, Sanderling, Ruff, Turnstone, first summer Arctic Tern, Black Tern and Waxwing.

The month started with an adult Great Northern Diver in summer plumage (check out photos on website!) and 2 first summer GND, only the adult and 1 immature on 3rd and, on 7th, the adult was displaying to the immature which fled site. The adult stayed on until 18th, the day a first summer Black-throated Diver arrived. A photo of the BTD revealed a few moulted flight feathers and it was still present on 31st. Will it summer moult here like one in 2003? Only 4 Little Grebe on site, so 2 chicks on 23rd were welcome. Great Crested Grebe totalled 41 on 17th but breeding success will be limited by falling water levels leaving nests high, dry and likely to fail at egg stage. There was a further brood of Mallard, taking the total to 9 and the first Coot brood, of 2, was noted on 23rd. Significant wildfowl counts were 4 Greylag on 9th, 15 Barnacle including wild 'ADZ' on 7th, 2 Shelduck on 25th, 2 Mandarin on 13th and 29th, a drake Wigeon from 12th, 4 Gadwall on 31st, 2 Teal on 11th, 66 Mallard, excluding young, on 17th, a pair of Red-crested Pochard from 12th, 2 Pochard on 30th, 80 Tufted Duck on 17th, a female Goosander on 24th and 68 Coot on 17th.

Raptors were active with a Red Kite over Sheepwash on 15th and Ospreys on 5-6th, 9th, 19th and 23rd. The bird on 5th landed on the new Osprey platforms, where it consumed a fish and roosted overnight. Photographs of this Osprey on the perch featured in several local newspapers, but subsequent tracing of its ring identification showed it to be a Scottish bird just passing through northbound. Sparrowhawk were noted carrying prey on 9th, 15th and 16th and 5 Buzzards were in the air on 9th. Hobby was noted on 9th and 23rd and 2 on 26th. A female Peregrine posed in front of Sheepwash Hide on 3rd, others were noted on 15th and 22nd, then, on 24th, one took a Common Tern which was peacefully perched with its mate in front of Sheepwash Hide.

Wader breeding so far is 2 broods from Oystercatchers, 3 from Lapwing and 2 from Redshank. A good selection of passage waders included 7 Little Ringed Plover on 25th, 1 Ringed Plover from 15th, 2 Sanderling on 18th, 9 Dunlin on 18th, 1 Ruff on 21st, 2 Snipe on 1st, a Black-tailed Godwit on 3rd, 2 Bar-tailed Godwit on 3-4th, 3 Whimbrel on 17th, 3 Curlew on 10th, a Greenshank on 5th, a Green Sandpiper on 4th, 4 Common Sandpiper on 3rd and 2 Turnstone on 31st.

The Black-headed Gull colony at the Wildlife Centre eventually took over the tern raft on 12th, following them abandoning it, leaving a dead gull there last month. Some started nesting in front of Sheepwash and on Flat Island. The local breeding pair of Common Tern were mating, then took up residence on Flat Island on 14th. A flock of 27 Common Terns flew through high north on 15th. The maximum number of Arctic Terns was 6 through east on 1st and a first summer Arctic landed at Sheepwash for a while on 21st, a rare event for this age group to be seen in Derbyshire. A Black Tern went through on 3rd.

The first Swift arrived on 1st, Reed Warbler on 7th and the first Spotted Flycatcher seen was already nest building on 24th. A wintering Waxwing calling for a few minutes from a treetop on 1st was a late surprise and a Marsh Tit in Tail Bay is the first since July 2008. There were a welcome number of records of common breeding birds including 10 nests of Tree Sparrow all being fed in a multi-nest box on 12th.

111 Species compared with 106 in May 2010, 108 in 2009, 112 in 2008, 103 in 2007 and 107 in 2006

APRIL 2011 BIRD NOTES

April Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Sacred Ibis! Red Kite, Osprey and Common Migrants.

Works to isolate Sheepwash Spit and use the spoil to form a protective spit and small island were completed at the beginning of the month. Although the spit is now an island it will retain its historic name 'Sheepwash Spit', and the partly submerged spoil spit and island nearer to Sheepwash Hide, already attracting passage waders and terns, will be referred to as Sheepwash Island.

The 3 Great Northern Divers stayed all month, the adult attaining full summer plumage by 27th. The 'wild' Barnacle Goose, ringed ADZ, was daily with the feral flock and there were at least 3 pairs with nests by 27th. A Sacred Ibis was at the Wildlife Centre from 1530hrs on 25th, origin unknown but most likely an escapee. Wildfowl counts were; only 2 Little Grebe all month, 42 Great Crested Grebe on 19th, 5 Greylag Geese on 7th and 17th, 59 Canadas on 19th, 32 Barnacles on 4th, 5 Shelduck on 21st, 2 Wigeon on 10th, 2 Gadwall on 17th, 55 adult Mallard on 19th, a pair of Shoveler on 10th, 126 Tufted Duck on 19th, 2 Goldeneye on 20th, 3 Goosander on 15th, and 67 Coot on 19th. Eight broods of Mallard (size; 13-17-7-6-11-7-19-3) were noted by the end of the month. Two Red-legged Partridge were flushed from a path in Fishtail Creek on 2nd.

There were 3 sightings of Red Kite; on 3rd, 6th and 26th during a month when many individuals were noted in Derbyshire. An Osprey delighted many observers from 0832 to 1530hrs at least on 2nd and again on 3rd and probably involves the same bird. A Hobby was seen from the Wildlife Centre on 19th and a Peregrine was noted on 3rd, 7th and 11th.

Wader passage included a maximum of 7 Little Ringed Plover on 14th, 1 Ringed Plover on 1st, 20th and 21st, 3 Dunlin on 9th, 1 Black-tailed Godwit on 19th, 1 Whimbrel on 20th, 23rd and 28th, 4 Curlew on 15th, 2 Greenshank on Sheepwash Island on 28th, 1 Green Sandpiper on Sheepwash Island on 17th and 4 Common Sandpiper, also on Sheepwash Island, on 29th. Most breeding pairs of Oystercatcher, Redshank and Lapwing were settled and sitting tight.

Very few gulls were around, and the noisy Black-headed Gulls vacated their raft breeding base at the Wildlife Centre and moved to the new island at Sheepwash, but no signs of breeding, yet! An immature Mediterranean Gull was at Sheepwash on 25th, 120 Lesser Black-backed were noted on 4th and an immature Yellow-legged Gull was at Sheepwash on 1st. The first tern through was a Common Tern on 1st, with a maximum of 3 on 27th. An Arctic Tern on 26th was followed by a flock of 46 straight through in the evening of 28th. Early Black Tern this year, with 5 off Stones Island from 1800hrs on 20th.

All 3 woodpecker species this month, with Green on 18th and 26th, Lesser Spotted on 9th and Great Spotted daily. Sand Martin passage reached 100+ on 3rd, Swallows 100+ on 13th, House Martins stuck at 2 on 4th and 12th and Swift did not come until 1st May. A Tree Pipit flew over Stones Island on 10th, the first Yellow Wagtail were 2 on 13th, with a maximum of 6 on 18th, only 1 White Wagtail on 13th, Common Redstart on 12th, 13th and 19th, 4 Wheatear on 2nd and a late Fieldfare flock of 50+ flew over Sheepwash on 1st. A Song Thrush pair was feeding fledged young on 28th. Warblers kept arriving with blackcaps everywhere, seemingly outnumbering all others this year. The first Sedge was on 19th, Lesser Whitethroat on 17th and 5 on 27th, Whitethroat on 19th, Garden on 19th and 7 on 27th, 28 Blackcap between Millfields and Hopton via WLC on 27th, 22 Chiffchaff on 4th and 19 Willow Warbler on 27th. A Pied Flycatcher was singing in Hall Wood on 22nd and 3 Tree Creepers were also singing in there on 19th. Horseshoe Island attracted a flock of 15+ Linnet on 11th and 6 Bullfinch were around Sheepwash car park feeder on 18th.

111 Species were recorded compared with 116 in April 2010, 110 in 2009, 118 in 2008, 103 in 2007, 118 in 2006, 117 in 2005, 116 in 2004, 120 in 2003 and 107 in 2002.

MARCH 2011 BIRD NOTES

March Highlights: Whooper Swan, 'Wild' Barnacle Goose, Rock Pipit, Black Redstart, Snow Bunting, and early summer migrants return.

Generally March has been a calm dry month with some good birds and good finds giving a monthly species count of 106, just below the best ever March of 107 species in 2005. The Great Northern Diver count was 2 juveniles at the start of the month, then 3 on 6th and 4 on 14th including 1 seen flying in at dusk on 14th. This number quickly reduced to 3, but included an adult bird not previously noted, and one was seen eating a crayfish on 28th. A national Whooper Swan movement northwards brought in flocks of 6 and 16 on 1st and 2 on 3rd. There was a Pink-footed Goose on Stones Island on 9th and 3 on 30-31st. A Barnacle Goose with an orange leg ring was found with the feral flock on 9th and stayed for the rest of the month. The leg ring letters ADZ were traced to it being ringed on 8/2/99 at Caerlaverock as a first year bird, so was hatched in 1998 and has been seen on the Solway most winters since. Maximum counts this month; 4 Little Grebe on 23rd, 38 Great Crested Grebe on 13th, 6 Greylag on 21st and 23rd, 36 Barnacle on 1st, 2 Shelduck on 20th, a pair of Mandarin on 21st, 24 Wigeon on 21st, 2 Gadwall on 3rd and 16th, 104 Teal on 7th, 81 Mallard on 13th, 2 Pintail on 1st-13th, 4 drake Shoveler on 13th, 12 Pochard on 1st, 270 Tufted Duck on 13th, 2 drake Common Scoter on 22nd, 15 Goldeneye on 7th, a drake Red-breasted Merganser on 27th, 3 Goosander on 28th, 8 Moorhen on 13th and 116 Coot on 13th.

A Red Kite was seen by several observers on 13th, 6 Common Buzzard were up over Carsington village on 11th and a pair of Peregrine were in flight together on 21st. At least 12 Oystercatchers were noted on 21st, many as pairs on their breeding islands. A Ringed Plover was around Stones Island on 25th and the first Little Ringed Plover of the year landed at Watersports on 26th. The remnants of the wintering Lapwing flock totalled 39 on 1st, 3 Dunlin were noted on 9th and there were 6 Snipe at the Wildlife Centre on 21st. Curlew were pouring through early in the month with flocks of 24 on 1st, 25 on 5th, 36 on 6th, 50 on 9th and 40 on 10th. At least 6 Redshank were present on 20th and probably all month, but spread around the site.

An adult Mediterranean Gull was in the roost on 7th. Counts of the gull roost proved difficult due to the spread of birds across the whole water, but include 900 Black-headed Gull on 28th, 200 Common Gull on 6th, 63 Lesser Black-backed Gull on 28th, 4 Herring Gull mid-morning on 27th and 11 Great Black-backed on 1st. There was an adult Yellow-legged Gull on 2nd and 9th, thankfully not the little grebe killer which has not been seen since the end of February.

The Barn Owl was hunting at Sheepwash again on 2nd and 14th. Good finds this month were a Rock Pipit on Sheepwash Spit on 7th, a female Black Redstart (fourth site record) in Wildlife Centre Creek on 29th and still there on 30th for several observers to catch up with this species, and a male Snow Bunting (second site record) on Sheepwash Spit early on 8th, staying only minutes but long enough for a record photograph. Spring migrant arrivals were; 6 Sand Martin on 26th and 25 on 30th, 2 Swallows on 29th, a male Common Redstart on 28th, a Blackcap on 30th, a Chiffchaff on 12th and 19 on 21st and a Willow Warbler on 30th. Other counts were; 24 Wood Pigeon on 3rd, 4 Great Spotted Woodpecker on 21st, 4 Skylark on 23rd, 23 Meadow Pipit on 28th, 23 Pied Wagtail on 11th, 100 Fieldfare on 28th, 61 Redwing on 10th, 160 Starling on 14th, 28 Tree Sparrow on 25th, 2 Brambling on 21st, 1 Linnet on 28th, 4 Lesser Redpoll on 16th, 6 Bullfinch on 7th, 1 Yellowhammer on 19th and 6 male Reed Bunting on 1st.

106 Species recorded this March compared with 101 in March 2010, 102 in 2009, 104 in 2008, 95 in 2007, 100 in 2006, 107 in 2005 and 98 in 2004.

FEBRUARY 2011 BIRD NOTES

February Highlights: Great Northern Divers, Brent Goose, Egyptian Goose, Smew, Red Kite and Caspian Gull.

A month of mainly grey cloud and mist but it brought in a bit of interest with two geese species and achieved an overall species sum of 90. Some of the breeding waders returned and most of the wintering wildfowl had moved on by the end of the month, all of which is usual. Water levels went up significantly during the last week and all islands now have water around them.

Last month's 3 juvenile Great Northern Divers were seen together up to 20th at least, 1 was seen flying off northwest on 26th and 2 were still present on 28th. Little Grebe numbers are at a serious low with a maximum of only 3 individuals found. The Yellow-legged Gull with an appetite for Little Grebe must be to blame, hopefully some birds have escaped to other waters. There were 4 Pink-footed Geese with the Canadas on 3rd, a dark bellied Brent Goose on 8th at Sheepwash, and 2 Egyptian Geese turned up at the Wildlife Centre on 10th. Egyptian Geese are now probably resident in the south of the county and have recently bred. Significant counts for February included 31 Great Crested Grebe on 10th, 33 Barnacle Geese on 13th, 3 Shelduck on 17th, 55 Wigeon on 13th, 102 Teal on 13th, 106 Mallard on 13th, 4 Pintail on 11th, 2 Shoveler on 24th, 285 Tufted Duck on 13th, 35 Goldeneye on 2nd, 1 female Smew from 1st to 10th, 2 Goosander on 1st and 171 Coot on 13th.

A Red Kite was seen heading north on 1st and 3 Common Buzzards were in the air on 14th and 24th.

Oystercatchers have been returning and claiming their breeding islands and totalled 7 by 17th and the Sheepwash area bird bearing a bar-code leg ring had returned by 20th. The early morning Lapwing roost in front of the Sailing Club held 308 birds on 20th and 1 Dunlin was seen occasionally from 8th and 2 on 28th. Curlew passage became busy towards the end of the month with 9 northeast on 23rd and 12 on 24th. There were 5 Redshank on site from 8th.

The gull roost has been difficult to count due to poor visibility and birds being widely spread but was estimated at 6000 birds on 16th, safely containing at least 4000 Black-headed Gulls. Other counts were 525 Common Gulls on 28th, 2 Herring Gulls on 16th, an adult Yellow-legged Gull all month, an adult Caspian Gull on 21st and 43 Great Black-backed Gulls at dawn on Sheepwash Spit on 17th.

A Stock Dove was noted on 4th and 14 Collared Dove were around the Ranger Base on 8th. Gull watchers from Sheepwash Hide were treated to a Barn Owl hunting on 11th, 14th and 16th. A Kingfisher was seen on 6th and on other dates at various locations including Millfields, Wildlife Centre and Sheepwash. Other sightings were; 2 Skylark over on 11th and 14th, 50 Redwing on 10th, 4 Mistle Thrush on 25th and 3 singing on 22nd, 4 Willow Tit on the Wildlife Centre feeder on 2nd, 180 Jackdaw on 8th, 40 Rook on the dam fields on 9th, 12 Tree Sparrow and 8 Brambling on the Wildlife Centre feeder on 4th, a Linnet flying over on 9th and 23rd and 5 Lesser Redpoll at Lane End on 3rd.

90 Species this month compared with 87 in Feb 2010, 86 in 2009, 86 in 2008, 88 in 2007, 89 in 2006 and 90 in 2005.

JANUARY 2011 BIRD NOTES

January Highlights: Great Northern Diver, Little Egret, Smew, Kittiwake and Mealy Redpoll.

A reasonable January for species numbers when there is no migration movement either locally or nationally. Bird numbers are noticeably low away from the water, which is mainly due to the snow and freezing conditions of Nov/Dec, having forced many southwards. Bird numbers on the water are slightly down on previous winters and a reported Ruddy Duck cull on 25th will certainly have contributed to the decrease.

The 2 juvenile Great Northern Divers stayed on from the Christmas period and were joined by another juvenile from 29th, taking our site total to 3 birds. A Little Egret was on Sheepwash Spit briefly on 13th, then went into Hopton Arm Reedbed. Pink-footed Geese were around with Canadas, with a maximum of 4 on 29th, and skeins over were; 43 west at 0955hrs plus 170 west at 1100hrs, both on 24th, 150 west at 1425hrs on 26th and 80 west at 0930hrs plus 50 west at 1020hrs, both on 29th. Another Little Grebe was killed and eaten by the Yellow-legged Gull on 13th and these grebes are currently rarely seen on site. Site counts this month were from the WeBS count on 16th, unless dated otherwise, and included 1 Little Grebe, 56 Great Crested Grebe on 2nd, 28 Cormorant on 18th, 3 Heron on 13th, 10 Mute Swans, 33 feral Barnacle Geese, 2 Shelduck on 17th, 231 Wigeon, 7 Gadwall on 2nd, 110 Teal, 210 Mallard, 3 Pintail on 19th, 2 Shoveler on 6th, 45 Pochard on 2nd, 553 Tufted Duck, 41 Goldeneye on 10th, a female Smew all month, 4 Goosander on 19th, 4 Moorhen and 1340 Coot.

Raptor records were few, with 2 Sparrow Hawk on 8th, 5 Common Buzzards in the air on 19th, 2 Kestrel on 18th and a Peregrine seen on 9th, 13th and 17th.

Waders included an Oystercatcher at Millfields on 20th, 315 Lapwing on 24th, a Dunlin 17-18th, a Snipe on 17th, a Curlew over on 15th, 17th and 18th and Redshank around all month, with a maximum 4 on 24th.

The gull roost has been poor and little watched. It contained an adult Mediterranean Gull on 24th and an adult Kittiwake briefly on 22nd before flying off north. Counts included 2500 Black-headed Gulls on 6th, 350 Common Gulls on 24th, 200 Lesser Black-backed Gulls on 6th, 150 Herring Gulls on 6th, 2 Yellow-legged Gulls on 12th and 24th and 30 Great Black-backed Gulls early morning on 3rd.

Two Stock Dove were in Tail Bay on 29th, a Kingfisher noted on 2nd and 17th, 3 Skylark over on 6th, 1 Meadow Pipit on 9th, 17th and 19th, a Grey Wagtail at Hopton End on 13th, 6 Fieldfare 9-10th, 12 Redwing on 24th, 2 Goldcrest in Hall Wood on 6th, 8 Long-tailed tit on Paul Stanley feeder on 16th, 3 Willow Tit on Wildlife Centre feeder on 6th, 3 Nuthatch and 2 Treecreeper in Hall Wood on 6th, 12 Rook on dam wall fields on 28th, 2 Raven from Sheepwash on 18th and other dates, 40 Chaffinch at Wildlife Centre on 24th, 40 Siskin on 10th and at least 2 Common (Mealy) Redpoll reported near Lane End Hide on pagers on 30th. This is only the second record of Mealy at Carsington and, until recently this species required a DOS rarity form submission.

89 Species this month comparing well with 86 in January 2010, 86 in 2009, 85 in 2008, 89 in 2007, 89 in 2006, 95 in 2005, 91 in 2004, 87 in 2003 and 75 in 2002.